

Healthy Kids (FY05-5030)

Additional information and specific outcomes will be added to each FY05 project summary as the project progresses.

The health problem or issue

The purpose of this project is to combat pediatric obesity. By intervening early, the initiative seeks to reduce the prevalence of obesity and also reduce the associated medical complications of Non-Insulin Dependent Diabetes (NIDDM) and hypertension. Low self-esteem is also often associated with pediatric obesity. Adult obesity is often preceded by pediatric obesity.

Hypothesis

Hands-on, interactive education provided at critical decision-making points will impact pediatric obesity.

Unique and/or innovative program aspects

This program takes children and their families to specific places where decisions regarding nutrition and physical activity are made – i.e., restaurants, the commissary, and fitness centers. Participants will be taught better decision-making skills in the environments where these decisions will be made. Showing participants how to make better decisions at decision points will not only increase knowledge but will also promote positive behavior change.

Demonstration of program effectiveness and/or impact

This initiative focuses on encouraging change in food choices and activity levels through a point system used by participants and their parents. Outcomes data includes pre-program, 8-week, and 6-month assessments for Body Mass Index (BMI), body fat, body image perception, pedometer recordings, and blood pressure.

Impact on force readiness and deployability

Pediatric obesity is associated with numerous medical conditions that place a family member in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). EFMP family members may limit a Soldier's PCS options and force the Soldier to accept positions based on proximity to Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). An EFMP family member may also force unaccompanied tours of duty, which create hardships for both the Soldier and the family. Teaching children good decision-making skills regarding food selection could reduce their risk for using food to fill the emotional loss of a deployed parent. In the long term, reducing incidence of pediatric obesity will improve the health of the potential recruiting pool in the future.

Potential impact on the HPPI portfolio

Information gathered from this project will be used to create a pediatric obesity toolkit appropriate for military beneficiaries.